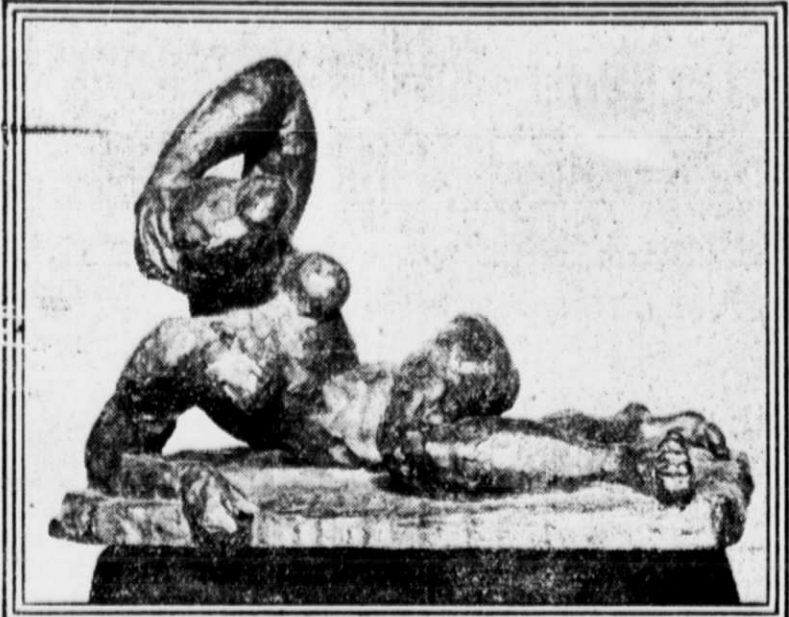


# WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE WORLD OF ART



Reclining woman, nude; in bronze, by Henri Matisse, at the Montross Gallery.

If you do not wish to succumb to modern art, keep away from it. Mr. Kenyon Cox and Mr. William M. Chase are already lost, although they may not know it. But they have looked upon it. To look is fatal. We wish to give all of our other faithful readers the friendly warning that drawings, etchings, lithographs, sculptures (oh, those sculptures!) and paintings by Henri Matisse are now on flagrant view in the Montross Galleries.

Poor Mr. Montross! Little did he dream two short years ago that he would have such a show as this in his beautiful galleries. But he was led into it by degrees. He went to the armory exhibition frankly as a seer, and he scoffed some, at the beginning, but the constant click of the turnstiles admitting famous ex-presidents of the United States and other great dignitaries who do not as a rule frequent our exhibitions sobered him and put him in the proper mood for reflection.

He vowed then and there, mark his words, that the day would come when he would have turnstiles clicking ex-presidents into his galleries. Art he saw was for the people. You might fool some of the people some of the time; but when they get to yawning at the academics and to saying that art is probably very fine and they are sorry but they don't care for art, and then when these same respectable men, led by the hundred thousands to the "modern art" show to goggle and argue and come to blows over the objects on display, there is something in the situation that the progressive art dealer, whose science it should be to know his public, might well ponder over.

For over a year there have been emblems of modernism at the Montross establishment. Little indications that those who know how to take a hint, but this great eruption of Matisse and the actual, visible turnstiles that refuse to turn until cold cash has been deposited will come as a surprise to some. We believe there is a limited free list for well known artists. Mr. Cox and Mr. Chase are both upon the list, we rejoice to say. Students later on will be allowed certain days for their madcap efforts.

But here is the curious thing that has happened. Mr. Montross, who sent for these Matisse things simply because he believed the public wished to see them, simply, in other words, as a business proposition, already admits that he likes them. He goes even so far as to say the paintings are beautiful!

There is no occasion to enlarge upon this phenomenon. You, dear reader, are likely to fall into the same state of mind if you go to see the pictures. If all that you know about modern art is what Mr. Cox told you, and you are perfectly satisfied with his account, then it will be much wiser for you not to go to the Montross Galleries. Much wiser. Even if all your young friends go and talk by the hour for and against the great or infamous Henri Matisse, be adamant. Don't go. To go is to fall into what Mr. Cox and the late Mrs. Mary Baker G. Eddy call "error."

Just there we felt a tug at our sleeve. We are writing this in a French cafe. We do not as a rule write criticisms in cafes, but there are times when every little bit of atmosphere counts. This is one of those times.

The tug came from a friend, an academician.

"Say, tell us: What's he driving at, that fellow Matisse?"

"Merciful powers! Have you never seen his work?"

"Sure, but the more I see of them the more my head spins. I thought at first they were simply fakes, but all you fellows see something in them, and maybe you're crazy, or perhaps it's me!—Anglais tel qu'on parle!—That's crazy, but if there's an idea in it I'd like to know what it is."

"The idea? My poor academician friend, that's what you'll never get from me. Did you ever hear a Cook's guide explaining the Puvion de Chavannes style to a party of Nebraskan schoolboys in the Pantheon? Did you ever read Ruskin's art made easy for dull intellects? Explanations that do not explain! When a picture can be explained it's already en route for the garret."

"Well, what pleasure do you get from him, then?"

"Part of the pleasure is in seeing you ruffled, my friend."

"Nice character you give yourself. Early entertained, you are?"

"Yes. If you want to know I'll tell you something. I don't know any more about Matisse than you do. It's just by accident I happen to be in the fashion by liking him. If I were out of fashion I shouldn't worry in the least. I don't believe in fawning about him. I like some Matissees and dislike others. Just as I accept certain Greeks and discard others. You wouldn't argue yourself into liking an artist, would you? What is it to you if you don't like Matisse?"

"I don't like to feel I'm missing something."

"On the contrary, you're *over* ting an opinion. Always feel the congratulatory glow of fellow who distinctly doesn't like a public favorite. My own pet vanity is a longing for Matisse. I should have disliked Rubens, I think, but that Thackeray disliked him first. Cox and Chase are simply stunning, you know, in the hearty, wholesome way they do to Matisse. All the moderns owe to have Cox and Chase detecting Matisse. Some of the younger fellows weren't even sure that Matisse amounted to anything until Cox came out with his denunciations. Great sport, isn't it?"

"Let me one thing. Is he honest?"

"Who, Cox?"

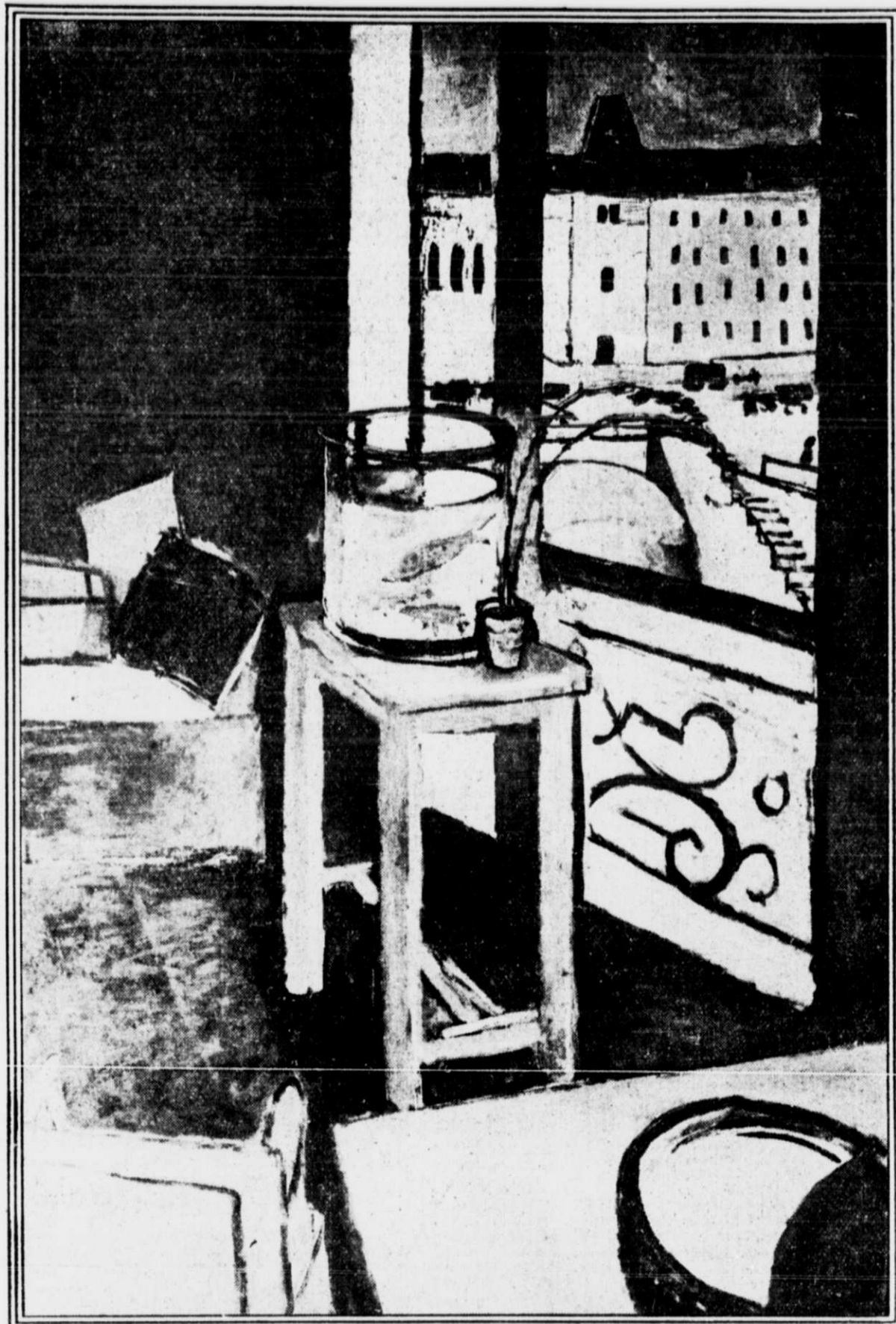
"No, Matisse."

"Matisse is the greatest name in art to-day. There is no one in France who is talked about with the same earnestness, no one who arouses a deep interest but him. Vuillard, Bonnard and Roussel are immensely clever Parisians who will be admired in America some day for their 'chic' just as they are appreciated for that quality now in Paris, but they owe too much to Matisse not to acknowledge him themselves as their master. There is nobody in Eng-

land before the outbreak; a period, you may be sure, that will be analyzed by future historians from every point of view. To have been the conspicuous painter of such a day bespeaks future attention for him.

"No doubt an artist, a catalyst will change the atmosphere. It always does. It is difficult to see how people for years to come in Europe will care for the refinements of Matisse, Watteau and Boucher went out, as you know,

known Millet called "The Quarriers," which came from the sale of the artist's effects in Paris, 1875. It is marked by Millet's invariable breadth of vision and sympathy with labor. The moment chosen is a particularly strenuous one, with two swarthy laborers, stripped to the waist, prying up a large piece of rock by means of a long, heavy wooden post, one bearing down upon it with all of his strength and weight and the other, underneath, in shadow, pulling



"Gold Fish," by Henri Matisse. Courtesy of the Montross Galleries.

in a similar situation, but they came back. Matisse may go out too, but he will come back. The world always has its recurring aspirations for the softer side once its robust, impatient gesture for fresh air has shaken down all the housepots.

"Art never had been so refined before, for the alliances and intermarriages between nations, due to the modern world welding brought about by science, compelled art to distill all perfumes into one essence. Congo and Persia, yes and no, thunder and flute pipings, nothing could be too blended for an age that knew everything, desired everything and got everything. The state of modern art did not bring on the war, as some cruel people suggest, but it clearly foreshadowed the inevitability of war. Anything so perfectly typical therefore will be invaluable later on."

"One has occasionally to hand out such bitter pills to your friends the academicians that it would be nice to pick something comforting in the way of a moral out of this great smash for them, but really I don't see anything coming to them out of the war. Matisse himself will not be broken. He and Rodin will go on working out their characters formed long ago. It is the great crucible that moulds public opinion that is broken."

"They will not have successors in the same line. But the academicians will not get back their dear Buzureau. Very likely the history of our civil war will be duplicated. For a decade or so there may not be any art at all. Heroes and persons capable of great energy will give all their force to State and business reconstruction."

The Ichabod T. Williams collection of paintings, which will be placed on public view in the galleries of the American Art Association beginning January 28, is one of those that will peculiarly interest American collectors, not only because the late Mr. Williams was a connoisseur of repute, but also because his gallery includes characteristic examples of the great Barbizon painters and equally important examples of work signed by the great names in our native art history.

No school is so beloved by collectors here as the Barbizon, probably because with its advent Americans were just beginning to invade Europe as purchasers. The pathetic struggles and final glorification of Jean-Francois Millet were of the kind to appeal especially to us as a nation, and his appreciation was helped by the ardent partisanship of William M. Hunt, one of the first of local art heroes, who by his campaigning managed to induce his Boston friends to buy wonderful Millet's before even France woke up to the genius of her peasant.

In the Williams collection is a little

downward, the picture is sombre, with the air of tragedy always lurking in the background, that Millet knew how to suggest.

Among the paintings signed by Millet's friend Theodore Rousseau is the canvas entitled "The Well," a glorification of moonlight and a summer night. In it with great power the artist has depicted the subtlety and depth, the mystery and vague suggestion of the moonlight that bathes dwelling and field, trees and water in soft radiance.

Toward the right is the well that gives the title to the picture, and wending her way toward it is a country maid, carrying water pails upon a yoke. This picture, which is both poetic and profound, was purchased, like many others in the collection, through the agency of the late Daniel Collier.

One of the Corots is also a study of silvery moonlight—the "Evening, Lake Nemi." The lake is seen at the right, but great trees along the shore spring up against the sky, providing the chief motive. In the shadow of the bank there is a figure seated in reverie, elbow on knee, head on hand. There were two other Corots in the collection; three by Troyon, including his "Morning on the Coast of Normandy," three by Daubigny and six by Diaz.

All the Maris family are represented; there are three pictures by Jacob, one by Willem and five by Mathew Maris. One by Jacob Maris is called "The Siesta" and was painted in emulation of the manner of Delacroix. One by Mathew Maris was done in collaboration with Monticelli, the Frenchman. This is "The Gala Day," the scene in a spacious wood, thronged by many paths, and fair ladies in gorgeous costumes are grouped in affectionate reclining ease about a marble monument. Near at hand on the left are numerous figures in a boat and across the water brilliant conversations are going on, and romantic couples are seen in every vista between trees.

Maive Mesdag, Bosboom and Schwartz are among the other modern Dutch painters, and in the French school are canvases of Desamps, Isabey, Bonin, Couture and Stevens. The Americans are headed by John S. Sargent, George Fuller, Wyant, Ryder, Murney, Twachtman, J. Alden Weir, Gendy Bunce and Arthur B. Davies.

The "Girl of Capri" in Sargent's picture leans against a bare railing that is graceful and has the pleasant face of the girls of this picturesque island. The painting has the usual decision and mastery of style of this master.

The George Fuller is the original of his famous and much talked about "Romany Girl." This picture, which was shown at the memorial exhibition of Fuller's works in 1881, is a symphony in golden



"The Quarriers," by J. F. Millet. In the Ichabod T. Williams Collection. Courtesy of the American Art Association.

brown, the Roman girl herself being a haunting, questioning figure, full of the people grace that flowered out in our literature also; seemingly she came straight from a tale by Hawthorne or Poe.

The Alden Weir is unusual for him, a "Museum of Music" the apparently was designed for a mural decoration. A majestic, goddesslike creature, in voluminous draperies, sits in a large, calm attitude by a balustrade and holds in one hand a meandered lyre. The example of A. B. Davies is called "The Sisters," and it dates from early in his successful career. The Blakeock is not a moonlight, but a figure piece, an "Indian Madonna," a young squaw with her papoose.

The sale of the collection takes place in the grand ballroom of the Hotel Plaza, beginning February 3, 8:15 P. M.

William H. Singer is a clever, well trained impressionist, and his present exhibition in the Peloson Galleries records the pleasure he took in a stay in Norway. He had the good fortune to live in a big mansion with terraces, that had an unusual garden attached to it. Mr. Singer seldom left the garden and he shows it to us with snow and without. No matter what the weather is that garden appears to be a perfect place. Once or twice he left the house and the village in which it was situated and wandered over to where the mountains begin abruptly, and there he did the swift flowing mountain stream, and the birches or pines that grew along them. He seldom glanced at the peasants, or if he did he keeps his opinions of their present state to himself.

No "Rosmersholm" nor "John Gabriel Borkman" problems bothered him, although the house that the painter lived in looks awfully like Rosmersholm. That round, sunken pool in the garden must have fascinated Beata horribly. Almost any one considering the "quick release" would be apt to give it a great deal of attention. That Beata "went" by way of the mill race simply proves that Mr. Singer's house is not, after all, Rosmersholm. Had it been she must have chosen the garden pool.

But we must shake off these gloomy conjectures. Norway isn't all blood, and as Mr. Singer hasn't mentioned him, why should we?

Mr. Singer is an impressionist and all impressionists are gay and cheerful and unconcerned with serious affairs. He used an agreeable palette that is not especially different from that used by most of the American impressionists, and he draws well enough to hide the traces of effort. He makes the skies go back and the little hillocks and bumps in the meadow take their proper places in the distance.

But his sense of what constitutes a picture is not profound. Like many another impressionist he fails to see the difference between the study and the painting. Painting the picture face to face with nature the artist is too much intimidated by the facts and puts in some that are irrelevant, to the confusion of the composition. Monet and Guillaumin, working outdoors also, are always in command of their facts. There is no doubt ever that they have a theme. They don't take up their brushes until they feel the motif. The lesser landscape impressionists too often plant their easels before a pretty scene and "do" it.

Mr. Singer is as we have said, clever, and he will hold his own with Frueke, Richard Miller, Metcalf and Hansen, though not, of course, with Weir. His "October" is one of his best, an exceedingly pleasant glimpse of a mountain stream; and his "Birches in Winter" reminds us again that impressionists usually do snow scenes in a more bearable style than the extreme realists.

## ART NEWS AND COMMENT.

IN the collection of Thackerayana now on view in the Anderson Galleries are many capital sketches; some mere pencil jottings, others ambitiously touched up with color. Charles Thackeray's admiration for "Vanity Fair" is well known, but it seems an extended, hearty admiration to Thackeray the draughtsman as well. He wrote to W. S. Williams on one occasion as follows:

"You will not easily find a second Thackeray. How he can render with a few black lines and dots, shades of expression so fine, so real, traits of character so minute, so subtle, so difficult to seize and fix, I cannot tell. I can only wonder and admire. Thackeray may not be a painter, but he is a wizard of a draughtsman; touched with the pencil, the paper lives. And then his drawing is so refreshing; after the wooden limbs one is accustomed to see portrayed by commonplace illustrators, his shapes of bone and muscle clothed with flesh, correct in proportion and anatomy, are a real relief. All is true in Thackeray. If Truth were again a goddess Thackeray should be her high priest."

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